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Jailhouse schlock

Soviet journalists in the United States like to hang out at American prisons. A week rarely passes without a story in the Soviet press portraying some convicted felon as a martyr to human-rights abuses in the United States. Most often the articles amuse, but sometimes they conjure things more sinister.

Take a recent story in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, filed by its New York correspondent Iona Andronov, who got into the federal pen in New York City and talked with one Francesco Pazienza, a former Italian intelligence official now awaiting extradition to Italy to face fraud charges. The Soviet publication thinks Mr. Pazienza has stashed away a file in Paris that can prove the May 1981 shooting of Pope John Paul was ordered by the Italian secret service and, ho-hum, the CIA.

This is another amazing gyration the Soviet bloc media have gone through to pin the papal shooting rap on someone, anyone, other than the Bulgarians that Mehmet Ali Agca said orchestrated the assault. First it was Agca the lone anti-Christain fanatic; then

came Agca the fascist working for a Turkish terrorist group. Now: John Paul, target of the CIA and its imperialist lackeys. You get the picture.

This garbage notwithstanding, how is it that someone of Mr. Andronov's repute is floating around freely? It's understandable why he packs *Literaturnaya Gazeta* credentials: he excels at fiction. Two years ago he produced a screed attempting to prove the KGB's CIA fabrication. And why are so many KGB agents loose in America under the guise of "working press"? They're working, all right, but not just for the newspapers.

You'll not hear a call to shackle reporters from this corner. But the scores of Soviet "journalists" scouring the land are far from legit. Like Mr. Andronov, most are disinformation artists whose masters are assuredly not typical newspaper publishers. Will the State Department finally tighten the regulations that allow these characters to roam the country?